

528 How Did Jesus Overcome?
Phil Sanders
God's Answers to Life's Questions

Life is filled with many kinds of struggles: Job stress, Financial burdens, Physical burdens, illness, and age. Great attention today is given to anxiety, stress, and hypertension. Christians face the struggle of temptation, sin, guilt, and self-discipline. Jesus endured all these things and faced the cross. How did He keep his composure on the cross, when so many people were mocking and abusing Him. How did he keep from calling twelve legions of angels? How did He overcome?

The word "struggle" tells us that a thing is "hard, demanding" and that one must take pains to get through it. Frequently there is the temptation to give up, losing heart. It is at this point in time when each of us wish we had more ability to fight, to discipline ourselves to do the right thing.

I have often wondered *how Jesus was able to bear all the struggle of his last hours before his death.* Jesus had patience, the "ability to endure under pressure." Jesus knew at Gethsemane of his suffering and crucifixion; knew that Judas would betray him; and knew that Peter would deny him three times.

I can only imagine the difficulty Jesus had enduring the mocking trial, the beatings, the blasphemies, and the scourging. He heard the crowd call for Barrabas and cry "away with Him!" and "Let Him be crucified!" Jesus saw Pilate wash his hands of the situation and turn him over to the Jews. He felt the weight of the cross upon his bloodied back and the crown of thorns upon his head. Jesus knew the torment of the crowds at his crucifixion. There never was a day when one so good was treated so cruelly with such hatred. Mankind did their very worst to Jesus.

Jesus could have put a stop to all this abuse at any time. You remember in the garden, when the soldiers and Judas came for Jesus. Matthew records in Matt. 26:51-54, "And behold, one of those who were with Jesus reached and drew out his sword, and struck the slave of the high priest, and cut off his ear. Then Jesus said to him, "Put your sword back into its place; for all those who take up the sword shall perish by the sword. "Or do you think that I cannot appeal to My Father, and He will at once put at My disposal more than twelve legions of angels? How then shall the Scriptures be fulfilled, that it must happen this way?"

What were the inner sources of Jesus' strength? Where did he get the nerve? Where did He find His courage? His fortitude? His power to endure? His stick-to-it ability? How did He have the spirit and self-discipline? *If we can understand his sources of power and if those sources are available to us, we can win the battle in our struggles as well.* I realize that Jesus had power beyond our strength, but Jesus did not use miraculous powers to overcome. He used inner strength. Can we find that strength? Is it available to us?

Jesus had some wonderful resources in the midst of his struggle that you and I can tap into as well. **First, Jesus lived with the assurance that He was not alone.** In John 16:32, Jesus said, "Behold, an hour is coming, and has already come, for you to be scattered, each to his own home, and to leave Me alone; and yet I am not alone, because the Father is with Me." Jesus had a marvelous relationship with His Father in heaven. In the scripture one often finds Him praying to the Father. His prayers were built on love and oneness of purpose. Jesus loved the Father and was devoted to His will.

This is why Peter could say in 1 Pet. 2:21-24, "For you have been called for this purpose, since Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example for you to follow in His steps, who committed no sin, nor was any deceit found in his mouth; and while being reviled, He did not revile in return; while suffering, He uttered no threats, but kept entrusting Himself to Him who judges righteously; and He Himself bore our sins in His body on the cross,

that we might die to sin and live to righteousness; for by His wounds you were healed." Jesus kept entrusting Himself. We can do that too, when have rough days.

Hand your troubles over to God—even Jesus did this! Jesus had four prayers in his struggle that kept him strong. First, in the garden, Jesus prayed in Luke 22:42, "Father, if Thou art willing, remove this cup from Me; yet not My will, but Thine be done." As they nailed his hands and feet, Jesus prayed, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do" (Lk. 23:34). In anguish Jesus cried out, "My God, My God, why have you forsaken me?" (Matt. 27:46; Psa. 22:1). And as He died, He said, "Father, into your hands, I commit my spirit" (Lk. 23:46). Jesus stayed close to the Father.

When we face the hardest times in our lives, we too can entrust ourselves and our spirits into the hands of God. Peter said in 1 Pet. 4:19, "Therefore, let those also who suffer according to the will of God entrust their souls to a faithful Creator in doing what is right." Sometimes all we can do is put ourselves into His hands. I love this poem: Into Your hands, Father, into Your hands, I commit my spirit into Your hands. All I am and have I yield to You. Your love and grace will bear me through, For You know what's best and what I should do, So I leave my soul within Your hands. **A second source of strength for Jesus was His Consuming Passion for His Mission.** Jesus came into this world to save men from their sins. He never forgot that. In Luke 19:10 Jesus said, "For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost." He cared about every person deeply. No one was beyond his love. Paul said in 1 Tim. 1:15-16, "It is a trustworthy statement, deserving full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, among whom I am foremost of all. And yet for this reason I found mercy, in order that in me as the foremost, Jesus Christ might demonstrate His perfect patience, as an example for those who would believe in Him for eternal life."

Jesus focused more on what he was doing as our Savior than focusing upon himself. In Matt. 20:27-28 Jesus said, "whoever wishes to be first among you shall be your slave; just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many." *Jesus on the cross was concerned about people.* He was gracious to the thief on the cross. Luke 23:42, 43 writes, "And he was saying, "Jesus, remember me when You come in Your kingdom!" And He said to him, "Truly I say to you, today you shall be with Me in Paradise." Strength comes from being unselfish.

I have often wondered if Jesus, while He was on the cross, could see the multitudes of people who would follow Him in the future. I mean the people of all time, in all places—every person who would believe in Him, love Him, and obey the gospel. I wonder if Jesus could see them in the churches through the centuries, people in every country worshiping the Father. Perhaps He was thinking also of you, my friend, wondering if you would serve Him. Jesus died for people He knew and loved; He wanted each one of them to go to heaven. But he also died for you, because He wanted you to go to heaven.

The writer of the book of Hebrews said in Hebrews 12:1-2, "Therefore, since we have so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let us also lay aside every encumbrance and the sin which so easily entangles us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God." The cross was not joyful, but knowing His loved ones would one day enjoy heaven forever kept him motivated to endure the cross.

The **third source of Jesus' strength was His undying, unfailling, and stubborn love for His Father and for people.** John tells us of Jesus' attitude when he met with his disciples on the night before He went to the cross. John 13:1 says, "Now before the Feast of the Passover, Jesus knowing that His hour had come that He should depart out of this world to the Father, having loved His own who were in the world, He loved them to the end." Jesus was willing to take the worst men could give to Him because of this overwhelming love within Him. It is truly hard to imagine such love.

It was almost as if Jesus said, "Do your worst to me, I will still love you. Scatter, deny me, betray me, I will still love you!" Jesus loved the people who crucified Him and hurled abuse at him. He said, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." Jesus loved people and hated the sin that separated them from His Father. I can hardly understand or explain such love. When Peter preached on the day of Pentecost and the people who crucified Jesus were pierced to the heart and cried out "What shall we do?" The Lord did not reject them but offered them the forgiveness of their sins.

While He was on the cross, the love of Jesus never failed; real love never fails (1 Cor. 13:8). Love means doing what is best for others at all costs--that's what Jesus did. Paul said in Ephesians 2:4-5, "But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved)." Jesus was willing to pay the ultimate price for your forgiveness, for your hope, and for you to have a home in heaven. Folks, God loves us greatly.

Matt. 16:21-23 says, "From that time Jesus Christ began to show His disciples that He must go to Jerusalem, and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised up on the third day. And Peter took Him aside and began to rebuke Him, saying, 'God forbid it, Lord! This shall never happen to You.' But He turned and said to Peter, 'Get behind Me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to Me; for you are not setting your mind on God's interests, but man's.'" Jesus never considered anything but saving us. *He focused on each of you enjoying heaven; it was a must.*

Our response to Him should be one of deep love and commitment. We should say with the apostle Paul in Gal. 2:20 "I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but

Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me, and delivered Himself up for me." Do you live and breathe Jesus Christ? Is He the first and most important thing in your life? Is He what you think about first thing in the morning and last thing in the evening? Do you live by faith in the Son of God? Would you die for Him?

Paul said in 2 Cor. 5:14-15, "For the love of Christ controls us, having concluded this, that one died for all, therefore all died; and He died for all, that they who live should no longer live for themselves, but for Him who died and rose again on their behalf." That love He showed for you and me ought to make a difference in our lives and whether or not we are willing to sacrifice ourselves for Him. It ought to make a difference in our moral lives, whether we go to church, how we treat others, and whether we tell others of Jesus Christ.

The main thing it ought to do is make us want to be a Christian. We can trust the Lord, who loves us so much. We can believe every word He says and can commit ourselves to keep every commandment. We can repent of our sins and forsake them completely. We can be united with Him by being baptized into Christ and rising to walk in newness of life. We can live our lives serving others, giving of ourselves to bless others and to show our love for God. Closeness to God, a sense of Mission, and undying love can make all the difference in our lives.

James gave us this promise in James 1:12, "Blessed is a man who perseveres under trial; for once he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which *the Lord* has promised to those who love Him." I don't know what struggles you face, but I know the Lord will bless you if you keep entrusting yourself to Him.

Put yourself into the hands of God. He will help you through it all. Into Your hands, Father, into Your hands, I cast all my burdens into Your hands, All my stress and pain I give to You. Your love and grace will bear me through, For You know what's best and what I should do, So I cast my cares into Your hands. Into Your hands, Father, into Your hands, I cast all my sins into Your hands, All I've said and done I bring to You. Your love and grace will bear me through, For You have told me what I must do, So I cast my sins into Your hands.

Copyright 2005 Phil Sanders
Concord Road Church of Christ
8221 Concord Rd., Brentwood, TN 37027
1-877-226-5747
phil@God-answers.org www.God-answers.org